



Textile Product Information in Apparel Advertisements:  
Content Analysis of Mademoiselle, 1942-1997

Monica Baziotes and Pamela V. Ulrich, Auburn University, USA

Keywords: Advertisements, apparel, magazines, textiles

Throughout the twentieth century, women have utilized magazines as a means of obtaining information concerning nearly every aspect of their lives. In the early 1900s, women read articles pertaining to society news and viewed illustrations of the latest fashions in publications catering to upper and middle-class consumers (Farrell-Beck & Parsons, 2007). In later decades, magazines addressed changing gender roles and advertised products that assisted in domestic duties (Walker, 2000).

The purpose of this exploratory research was to investigate the information provided to female consumers in apparel advertisements found in fashion magazines published during the twentieth century. Mademoiselle, published between 1935 and 2001 (Endres & Lueck, 1995; Kuczynski, 2001), was selected for the study because it was originally intended to be a version of Vogue targeting younger women (Endres & Lueck, 1995). The period being researched included major textile innovations, and younger consumers are often more open to trying new products. Consumer product marketers made considerable effort to target the young women that read Mademoiselle by advertising in the magazine (Zuckerman, 1998). Walker (2000) related the success of magazines like Mademoiselle to the increasing awareness in the 1950s of younger consumers as a distinct target market.

Before beginning the research, a preliminary scan of Mademoiselle magazine issues spanning six decades found that product information was often included in apparel advertisements in the century's middle decades. Twelve issues of Mademoiselle published between 1942 and 1997 were analyzed to collect the data for the study. Seeking data from issues every five years yielded adequate data for an exploratory study. To ensure that two years within each decade were represented, the years selected were those ending in 2 and 7 (i.e., 1942, 1947, 1952, 1957, etc.). The September issue for each year was examined because this is typically the edition containing the most pages, and thus, the largest number of advertisements for analysis. Full-page apparel advertisements containing text that communicated more than the fiber, yarn, or fabric name were selected for analysis. Advertisements that only promoted a textile product were omitted from the sample, as the purpose was to investigate the presence of textile information for apparel products. Advertisements that might have been developed jointly by textile and apparel businesses were included.

A total of 71 advertisements were identified as data to be analyzed. The number of relevant advertisements increased during the first two decades and peaked with 17 promotions used for the September 1962 analysis. After 1962, apparel advertisements containing textile product attributes decreased and eventually disappeared by the 1980s. Results revealed 1) textile product attributes were advertised more than apparel brands throughout the years, 2) a

concentration of fabric promotion following World War II, 3) a focus on fibers and joint advertising during the 1950s and 1960s, and 4) the disappearance of textile product attributes in apparel advertising by the 1980s.

An innovation can be defined as any type of product that consumers recognize as being new regardless of whether it is or is not (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). The Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971) purports there are five phases in the dissemination of new products or ideas: 1) knowledge, 2) persuasion, 3) decision, 4) implementation, and 5) confirmation. The inclusion of textile product information in fashion magazine apparel advertisements during the 1950s and 1960s may indicate an attempt by companies to increase consumers' knowledge of new fibers shortly after their introductions. It seems reasonable to conclude that this historical example of advertising new textile innovations illustrates the first phase (knowledge) of innovation diffusion and was perceived to be important to promote widespread adoption of these fibers.

#### References

- Endres, K. L., & Lueck, T. L. (1995). *Women's periodicals in the United States: Consumer magazines*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Farrell-Beck, J., & Parsons, J. (2007). *Twentieth century dress in the United States*. New York, NY: Fairchild Publications.
- Kuczynski, A. (2001, Oct 2). Goodbye to Mademoiselle: Conde Nast closes magazine. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/02/business/the-media-business-goodbye-to-mademoiselle-conde-nast-closes-magazine.html?scp=1&sq=mademoiselle%20magazine&st=cse>
- Rogers, E. M., & Shoemaker, F. F. (1971). *Communication of innovations: A cross-cultural approach* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Solomon, M. R., & Rabolt, N. J. (2004). *Consumer behavior in fashion*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Walker, N. A. (2000). *Shaping our mothers' world: American women's magazines*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Zuckerman, M. E. (1998). *A history of popular women's magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.